

From the Desk of ...



Congressman Dan Lungren

California

November 23, 2005

Dear Citizen:

I thought you might be interested in hearing about an unexpected experience I had two weeks ago. On Wednesday, November 9, my office received a call in the morning asking if I would come to the White House to meet with the President on the war in Iraq and other issues. I had my staff rearrange my schedule so I could attend and along with less than two dozen other members boarded a bus to go to the White House at 3:30 in the afternoon.

When we arrived at the White House, we were surprised to be led up to the second floor - the private quarters of the President and his family - for our meeting. While I have been in and around Washington, DC off and on for 35 years and have had the opportunity to be invited to the White House on a number of occasions, this is the first chance I had to visit the private quarters.

After a short period of social mixing, we sat down on several couches and chairs to engage in a dialogue with President Bush. Contrary to some of the press reports I have seen recently concerning his personal demeanor, the President was very friendly, outgoing, vigorous in his presentation, well versed on the issues, and manifested a command of details. It was obvious that he sees the defense of the nation against the danger of radical Islamic fascism as his major duty. He is passionate in his description of the threat to our nation. In particular, he read us a letter written by Al-Qaida's number two leader, Ayman Zawahiri to his deputy in Iraq - the terrorist Zarqawi. In the letter, Zawahiri writes that Al-Qaida views Iraq as "the place of the greatest battle." In this and other parts of the letter, it is obvious the terrorists regard Iraq as the central front in a war against us and others who are part of the "western world".

The President made it clear that we should take these terrorists at their word and understand clearly the importance they have attached to the outcome of the war in Iraq. In fact in his letter, Zawahiri makes specific reference to the outcome of the Vietnam War and declares that "the aftermath of the collapse of the American power in Vietnam - how they ran and left their agents - is noteworthy." Further in the letter Al-Qaida's number two leader stresses the specific goals of their Jihad: "The First Stage - expel the Americans in Iraq. The Second Stage - reestablish an Islamic Authority or Amirati, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a Caliphate. The Third Stage - extend Jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq. The Fourth Stage - the clash with Israel."

Zawahiri makes it clear that the war does not end with the Americans' departure from the

region and that they must defeat us before the appeal of democracy to the Iraqis is successful in establishing a stable government. Interestingly enough, he notes that the greatest part of the struggle is taking place "in the battlefield of the media".

The President recognized the necessity for us to "succeed in the battlefield of the media". In other words, he stated that he would be discussing the war on terrorism repeatedly and in greater detail than he had before, that the sacrifice sustained by our men and women in uniform require us to be more vigorous in our defense of our actions. In short order, let me quickly mention several points the President stressed about the current state of affairs in Iraq.

1. We are taking cities and territories back from terrorist control.
2. Iraqi troops are securing more areas. (For example: in August 2004, five Iraqi Regular Army battalions were in combat. Today, ninety-one Iraqi Regular Army battalions are in combat.)
3. Iraqis are making great strides in making a democracy with greater freedom. (It seems that we do not recognize the importance of several historic actions taken by the Iraqi people so far this year. The January elections were historic, dramatic, and successful. On the 15th of October, nearly 10 million Iraqis turned out to vote on a new constitution. And in less than a month, Iraqis will go to the polls to elect a permanent government.)

We had an opportunity to question the President on his strategies, the opinions of our military leaders, the rate of progress leading to the withdrawal of American troops in Iraq, the need to be more direct with the American people on the challenges that lie ahead as well as issues concerning the cost of the war and the long term prospects in the Middle East.

I had an opportunity to raise some of these questions as well as deliver to the President other concerns expressed by the constituents who have attended my 3rd District Town Hall meetings. These included the serious problems of illegal immigration and continued federal deficit spending. In the arena of the budget deficit, we have different perspectives. I politely, but strongly articulated my concerns that have been echoed by 3rd District constituents in 17 town halls and or telephone town hall phone conversations throughout 2005 and suggested that the President exercise the use of his veto pen on spending bills.

In total, we met with the President for about one hour and fifteen minutes. The consensus of those in attendance was that the President was open to us, took into consideration the points that we raised, and was very much in command of facts, tactics, and strategy concerning our greatest challenge - terrorism in the name of Islamic fascism. I hope this gives you some idea of the dynamics of a meeting with the President of the United States as well as the current state of his thinking. I would welcome any comments you might have on the issues that were raised.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DL', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel E. Lungren
Member of Congress

P.S.

Please consider attending **this Monday's** [November 28, 2005] town hall meeting at Empire Oaks Elementary School located at 1830 Bonhill Drive, Folsom California. We will begin at 7 p.m. and conclude at 9 p.m. We will discuss Flood control, Folsom Dam, the proposed new Folsom Bridge and **any** other Federal topics that would be of interest to you.

www.house.gov/lungren

[Click Here](#) to be removed from this list